



California Department of Parks and Recreation
Diablo Vista District - Bay Sector
96 Mitchell Canyon Road
Clayton, CA 94517



John Marsh / Cowell Ranch GENERAL PLAN



NEWSLETTER #1



JOHN MARSH / COWELL RANCH

Calendar of Events

PLANNING PROCESS AT A GLANCE

WINTER/SPRING 2006	SPRING/SUMMER 2006	FALL 2006	WINTER 2007	SPRING 2007
Information Gathering Fieldwork PUBLIC PLANNING WORKSHOP #1	Summarize Existing Conditions Discuss Challenges and Opportunities Develop Plan Alternatives	PUBLIC PLANNING WORKSHOP #2 Refine Plan Alternatives Develop Draft General Plan	Finalize Draft Plan and Environmental Review PUBLIC PLANNING WORKSHOP #3 Prepare Final Environmental Review	Commission Hearing and Approval Distribute Final Plans and Environmental Review Agency Approvals

PARTICIPATION IS THE KEY TO A GREAT PLAN!

If you are not currently on our mailing list and would like to receive the planning update and notice about future workshops, or wish to send written comments, please contact us at:

California Department of Parks and Recreation
Diablo Vista District - Bay Sector
96 Mitchell Canyon Road
Clayton, CA 94517
925.673.2895
(for questions or comments about the General Plan Process)

Contact Information

Visit Our Website
www.parks.ca.gov
(General Plans in Progress)



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PARTNERS IN PARK PLANNING

In a collaborative partnership, California State Parks and the City of Brentwood Parks and Recreation Department are launching a joint planning process to plan for the future development of John Marsh / Cowell Ranch. Working together with the community, this planning process will create a vision for the future, provide recommendations for the future of the historic John Marsh House, public recreation access, and natural resource management as well as set guidelines for implementation of a long term vision for the Park so it can be enjoyed for years to come. We invite you to join us in envisioning the Park's future!

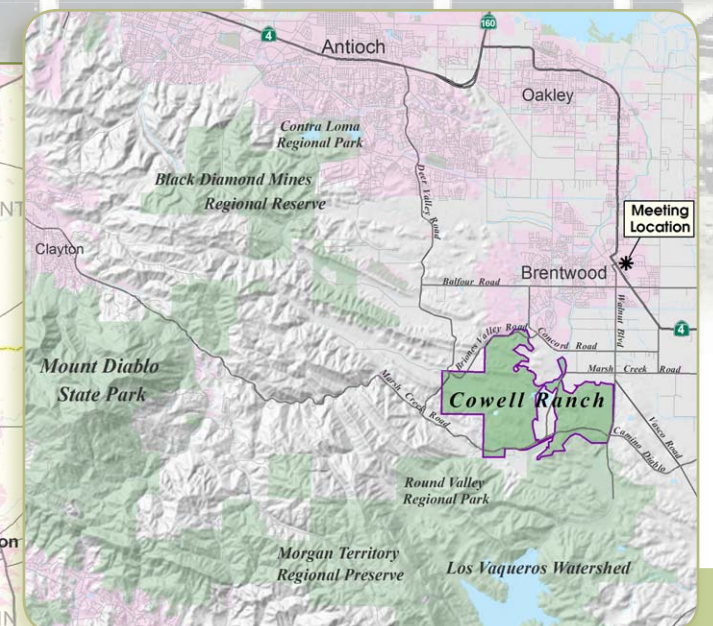
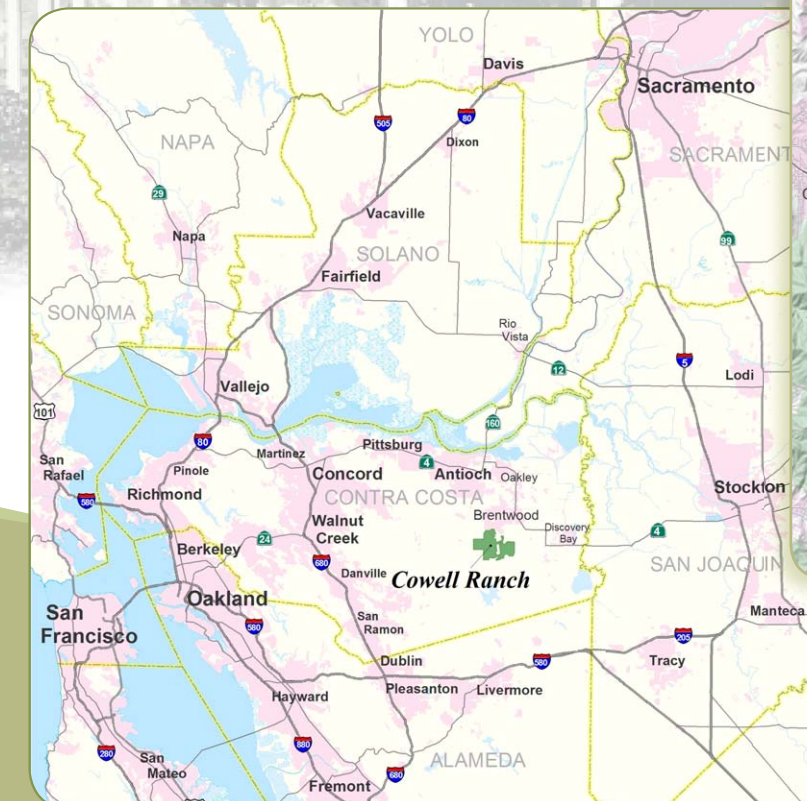
John Marsh / Cowell Ranch encompasses nearly 4000 acres of natural habitat, wildlife, and unique cultural features, including the John Marsh House, nestled within one of California's fastest growing regions. Through the efforts of concerned citizens as well as the Trust for Public Land and other public entities, John Marsh / Cowell Ranch is one of California's newest state parks. We welcome your ideas and suggestions for future public use and preservation of this valuable resource. You can start by filling out the enclosed questionnaire and attending the Public Planning Workshop on May 17. Early public input will provide us insights into your priorities, desires and concerns as we begin planning for the diverse resources at this new state park.

HOW CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE?

Stay Informed: This and future newsletters will keep you informed of the progress of the General Plan process. Over the next year and a half, we'll be working together to discuss and evaluate a variety of planning topics including recreation facilities, cultural and historic resources, habitat protection, and education and interpretive programs, to name just a few. This newsletter will track our progress and notify you of upcoming opportunities for public participation and input. Additionally, you can visit the California State Parks website noted on the back.

Fill Out the Questionnaire: The enclosed questionnaire will help us understand your key issues, ideas and concerns. Tell us how you think the Park could best serve the needs of its surrounding communities. What features would you like the Park to offer, and how you see the Park fitting in with the existing fabric of open space and recreation within the region.

Attend the Public Planning Workshops: We will host three public workshops for the John Marsh / Cowell Ranch General Plan. The first workshop will be held on May 17 at the City of Brentwood's Community Center. The workshop will provide a forum to share your knowledge and experiences about the history of the and adjacent land and to identify topics and issues to explore during the planning process. Please join us!



Public Planning Workshop
Wednesday, May 17, 2006
6:00 PM to 9:00 PM
City of Brentwood
Community Center
730 Third Street
Brentwood, CA 94513
925.516.5444

APRIL 2006

John Marsh / Cowell Ranch



The John Marsh / Cowell Ranch is located southwest of the City of Brentwood in eastern Contra Costa County. It lies within the rolling foothills of the Diablo Mountain Range. Mount Diablo's peak is 10.5 miles from the center of the site. The John Marsh House and 14 adjoining acres were acquired by California State Parks in 1978. In November of 2002, an additional 3,746 acres adjacent to the House were acquired from the Cowell Foundation through the efforts of the Trust for Public Lands and other public entities.

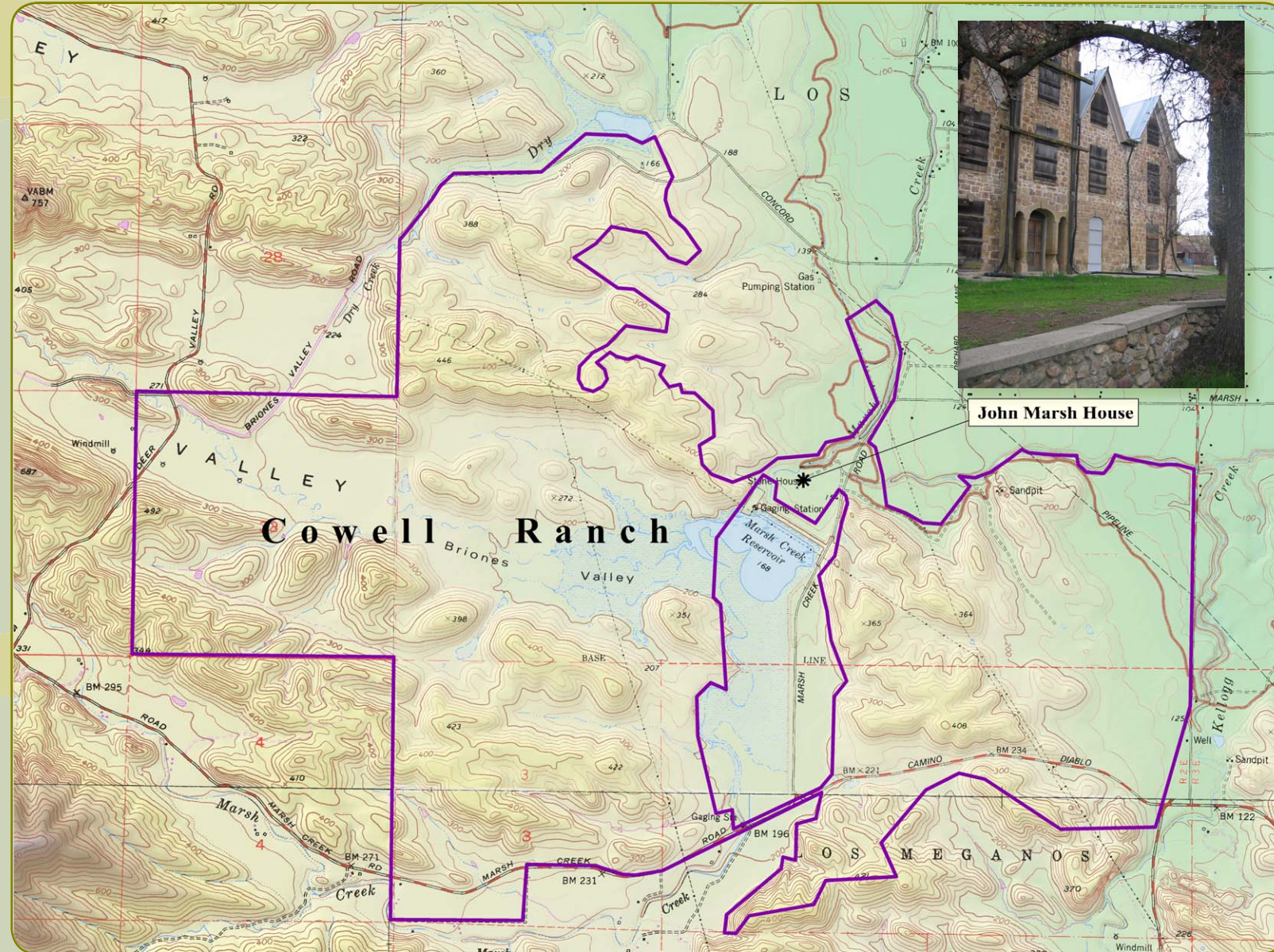
The Park provides an additional link in over 81,000 acres of contiguous public open space within the region. Vital not only for the potential visitor recreation opportunities but for its open space values and ecological diversity including wildlife habitat, native plant communities and a rich array of pre-historic and landscape-based cultural resources as well as the history of John Marsh and his influence on the region. Completion of the General Plan will provide a long term vision for the Park as well as a strategy for the rehabilitation of the John Marsh House and opportunities for recreation and long term resource management.

JOHN MARSH / COWELL RANCH RESOURCES

John Marsh / Cowell Ranch is part of a large, contiguous grassland, savanna, and oak woodland habitat that extends through Contra Costa and Alameda Counties, containing a portion of Briones Valley. Other important habitats found within the Park are vernal pools, wetlands and Marsh Creek. This region is the northernmost habitat for the state threatened/federally endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox, and Cowell Ranch is known to support populations of other threatened or endangered species, such as the burrowing owl, California tiger salamander and vernal pool fairy shrimp.

John Marsh / Cowell Ranch resources include:

- Historic architecture
- Ranch and agricultural historic landscape
- Native American resources
- Marsh Creek and riparian habitat
- Vernal pools
- Briones Valley



PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

The John Marsh / Cowell Ranch is unique because California State Parks and the City of Brentwood have formed a special partnership to create a Plan for the Park. The two agencies will work closely together throughout the planning process and to craft a long term strategy that is responsive to the local and regional community. This partnership, along with consultation with other local and state entities will result in the potential for unique cooperative agreements for operation and management of facilities and resources, ensuring successful Plan implementation.

As part of the planning process the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report will be integrated with the development of the Plan to reduce potential harmful environmental effects to Park resources. Alternatives will be developed to provide a range of options for future use and management of the Park. Together the Plan and environmental review process will be designed to allow for full public participation and review. We encourage you to follow our timeline and stay involved!

GENERAL PLAN PUBLIC PROCESS

Information Gathering + Fieldwork

- Site Orientation
- Resource inventory and data collection
- Stakeholder interviews

Existing Conditions Summary

- Additional data collection, review and field reconnaissance
- Public knowledge exchange workshop
- Identify stakeholder issues

Challenges and Opportunities

- Analyze challenges and opportunities
- Develop plan alternatives
- Public workshop to discuss alternatives

Draft Plan Preparation

- Develop plan policies and guidelines
- Public open house
- Environmental impact analysis and mitigation
- Draft plan public workshop
- Final plan approval



Some topics that will be considered in the General Plan process include:

- Visitor use and facilities alternatives
- Comprehensive cultural resource management
- Interpretive themes and educational opportunities
- Park operations and maintenance facilities
- Relationship to the adjacent Marsh Creek Reservoir